CECIL ANDRUS REMEMBERS

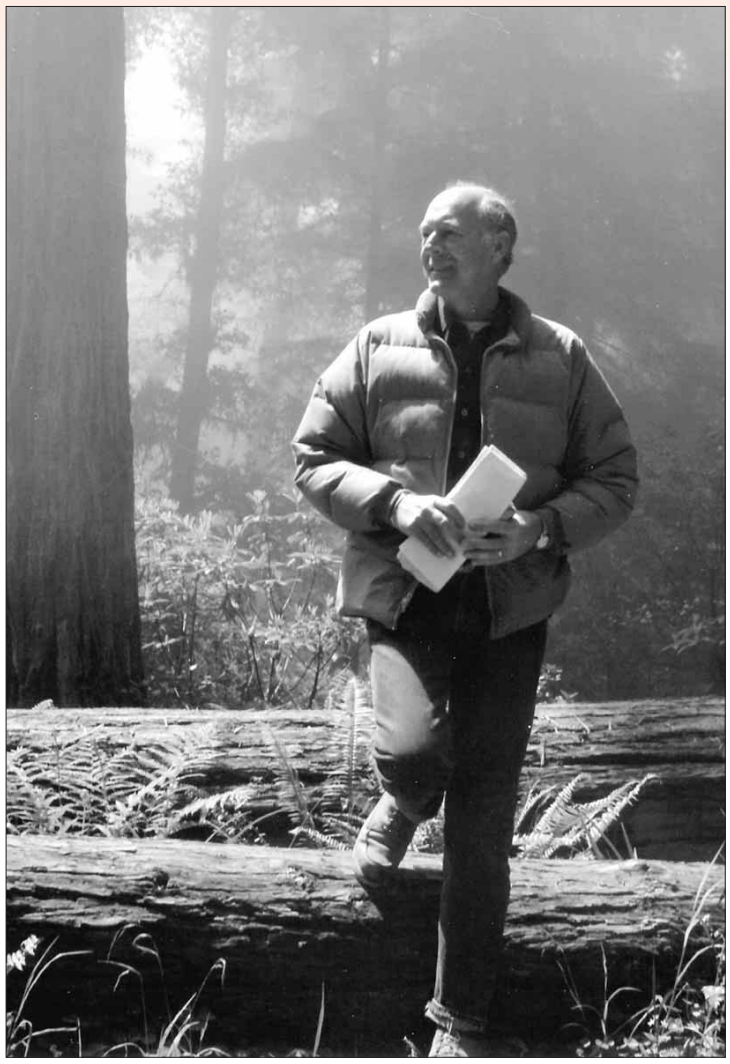
Time was running out on the Interior Secretary, and the Alaska Lands Act teetered in the balance.

When Congress approved the 103-million-acre Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act in **President Carter's** waning days in office in 1980, a lame-duck administration was briefly able to look like a swan. However tarnished his record may have appeared, Carter managed to leave behind a legacy of volcanic craters, alpine lakes, ancient forests and tundra, and federal land managers who weren't devoted only to drilling, digging up, and cutting down the great resources of America's 49th state.

At the time, nobody gave Jimmy Carter credit, or seemed to notice. Alas, the legacy was located just about as far from Washington, DC, as you can go in America and worlds away from the movers and shakers of our capital. Only one capital pundit, political cartoonist **Pat Oliphant**, consistently drew on the issue. Alaska and the West had yet to become one of America's 'hot' places to live or visit.

Those days crystallized my impatience toward the town in which I had labored as Secretary of the Interior for four years. The media was filled with reports of **Ronald** and **Nancy Reagan's** arrival and their observance of the rituals of social courtship that the Carters had shunned. A dinner party for the Gipper at Katharine Graham's mansion merited exhaustive coverage. Who cared if down at Carter's White House, the size of the national park system was doubled?

The Alaska Lands Act was signed in the East Room of the White House in December 1980. I watched a tired and drawn Carter arrive for the ceremony. Then, for a moment as he acknowledged the applause—perhaps the last such moment of his presidency—Carter became relaxed and expansive. The color came back to his face.



Cecil Andrus served as Secretary of the Interior from 1977 to 1981.

The rap on Carter, endlessly circulated in press reports and capital chatter, was that he was mean without being tough. The assessment was wrong on both counts: Trust the testimony of somebody who, as a Cabinet member, watched him for four years. Carter was never a glad-hander. He guarded his privacy. The president's pale blue eyes occasionally would fix on someone and register dissatisfaction without a word being spoken. As a friend he was considerate, however, and as a boss he was somebody who shared in the heavy lifting. I needed his help, big time, in pushing the largest land conservation initiative in American history.

The key action that produced the White House signing ceremony had come two years earlier. Negotiations in Congress for a bill creating parks and wildlife refuges in Alaska had broken down. A moratorium on development was about to expire, opening vast areas of proposed parkland to activities that might preclude preservation. The Administration, as the key player in the conservation battle, had to show that it meant business.

I approached Carter with the then-70-year-old Antiquities Act, a law that gave the President authority to proclaim national monuments on federal land. **Theodore Roosevelt** had used it to protect the Grand Canyon and Death Valley. Laying out a map of Alaska, I recommended to the President that he proclaim as national monuments the parks we had proposed. In this way, he would at least set aside 56 million acres and protect places from the Gates of the Arctic portion of the Brooks Range in the far north to the Misty Fjords area at the south end of the Alaska Panhandle.

"Can I do that?" Carter asked, incredulous that here was a domestic issue on which the President could decisively act. "You have the authority, sir," I responded. "Let's do it," he said. Proclamation of the monuments caused enormous yelping, as would **President Clinton's** designation of the Escalante-Grand Staircase National Monument in Utah 18 years later. Developers were precluded from the familiar tactic of nibbling away at proposed parklands. A court action against Carter's proclamation was filed. At the Alaska State Fair, folks lined up and paid to throw bottles at a likeness of me.

The proclamation worked as a political tactic. A decision on whether to set aside a portion of America's last frontier, in its natural state, could not be delayed to death. The opponents of large-scale land preservation were brought back to the bargaining table, the hostile presidential action driving them to strike a deal. They would eventually have to agree to a sweeping settlement that turned Carter's national monuments into national parks and protected millions more acres as wildlife refuges, wild and scenic rivers, and wilderness areas.

A key skirmish in the battle over Alaska had also taken place in the Carter Cabinet. In northern Alaska, I championed creation of an Arctic National Wildlife Refuge that would protect the full migrating range of the Porcupine caribou herd, perhaps the greatest concentration of hooved mammals in North America. Absolutely essential to this goal was preserving calving grounds along the Beaufort Sea. Here was where caribou had their calves and where they escaped one of the world's fiercest concentrations of mosquitoes. Wolves and grizzlies, in turn, depended on the calving for a supply of meat. The natural food chain was undisturbed.

The coastal plain near the Beaufort Sea was, however, a place where oil and gas producers wanted to drill. They talked of discovering oil reserves that would equal or surpass those of Prudhoe Bay to the west, which had caused the Alaska pipeline to be built and were the foundation of the state's wealth. It was, and is, a question of values. I was aware that the industry's own calculation of the odds against discovering oil in quantities that were economically recoverable stood at 4-1. Whatever oil we found would satisfy a few months or at most a year's worth of the nation's insatiable demand for petroleum, at an environmental cost that was potentially enormous.

Secretary of Energy **James Schlesinger** took a different view. This was the eve of the world's second great oil crunch. The Shah was being toppled in Iran. Schlesinger talked incessantly of an impending crisis and argued with conviction for the goal of energy independence. The Alaska debate would flare up in Cabinet sessions. I would make a pitch for the refuge. "Yes, but we have a great wealth of oil that we will be unable to get to," Schlesinger would reply. "There is a storehouse of BTUs beneath the tundra."

Carter would appear to have resolved the matter by saying, "I'm going with Cece on this one." Of course, nothing was resolved, in the Cabinet or later in Congress. The Alaska Lands Act contained a Solomonic compromise. A 19-million-acre Arctic National Wildlife Refuge came into being. But only eight million acres were classified as wilderness, permanently precluding oil and gas exploration. The coastal plain was left out of the wilderness designation. Assessments of its oil potential were authorized. Congress was given the final decision on whether to allow drilling. It was a formula for never-ending conflict. Decades later, the oil industry and environmentalists are still locked in combat over the caribou calving grounds.

Looking back, I'm amazed at how much we were able to do. I called on Carter consistently; whatever the world's crises at the moment, he put out the requested effort. He backed me in the Cabinet. He proclaimed the national monuments. He made calls to Congress. He listened politely to an emotional appeal from Alaska Senator **Ted Stevens**, who argued that his state's economic development would be hamstrung by a big parks bill. As a power on the Senate Appropriations Committee, Stevens could offer any number of deals to the President. The Georgian had a genuine feel for preservation on a big scale, however, and of what is meant by long-term legacy. Carter was also willing to challenge the western notion of 'frontier' as synonymous with exploitation and to set parameters of preservation before public lands were committed to development.

Long-term legacy is tough to think of in the pressure cooker of Washington, DC. The capital's culture often reminds me of a major league baseball team that is pressured to win this year's pennant by trading away its future talent. Always there are budget bills to be passed. Carter had energy proposals, from oil shale development to filling the nation's petroleum reserve, that were stalled in a Congress run by his own party. Yet he would not deal away the long-term future of wild, faraway lands in order to realize immediate gain.

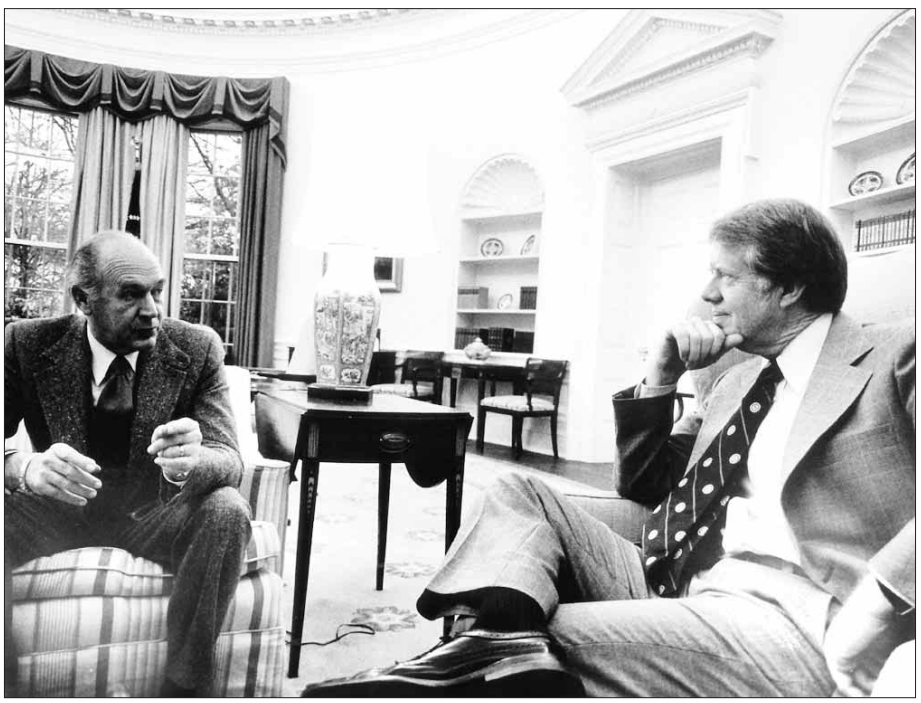
The 49th state was, and is, our country's last frontier. So much of the American West was settled in a head-over-heels fashion during the late 19th Century. Immense land grants were given to railroads, leading to the huge timber clear-cuts of the late 20th Century. By the end of the 19th Century, however, buffalo had been exterminated. Millions of acres were over-grazed, so badly that Theodore Roosevelt was writing angry letters from the Dakotas as early as the 1880s.

Alaska was our one last chance to do things right, to recognize for once that the highest and best use for a big chunk of America's frontier was not 'taming' but protection. Alaska had not fared all that well in the first century after its purchase from Russia in 1867. It was seen only as a place to be exploited. Boom and bust was the rule. Resources were seized upon and decimated. Fur seals were hunted to the brink of extinction, salmon runs were over-fished, and minerals were gouged from the earth with abandon.

In the curious way that epic decisions get made, the impetus to preserve nearly a third of Alaska was provided by discovery of oil at Prudhoe Bay and the challenge of moving it to market. After much debate, a so-called all-American pipeline became the chosen transport route. It would carry crude oil from Prudhoe Bay to Valdez in southern Alaska, whereupon it would be shipped by tanker— without risk, the oil companies assured everyone—to the Lower 48. But environmental disputes pressed on the pipeline, along with the genuine moral concern that Americans not replicate another wrong of the 19th Century—the brutal displacement of aboriginal peoples.

A wise predecessor of mine, Interior Secretary **Stewart Udall**, had moved in 1966 to freeze all disposition of land claims in Alaska pending settlement of claims by the state's native peoples. The action stopped homesteading and kept the State of Alaska from completing the acquisition of 104 million federal acres that it was guaranteed upon statehood in 1959. The resolution of native land issues became a necessary prelude to building the pipeline or getting anything else done in Alaska.

Udall's action prompted Congress to pass a landmark law for Native Americans, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, which in turn led to the great conservation act that President Carter signed in the East Room. The claims settlement act, passed in 1971, gave legal rights to Alaska's native peoples and divided the state into 12 native regional corporations, which received land according to historic patterns of use. A 13th corporation represented natives in urban areas. In this way, natives were apportioned 44 million acres of Alaska, in addition to receiving almost $1 billion.



Secretary of the Interior Cecil Andrus with President Jimmy Carter in the Oval Office. Photo courtesy of the Jimmy Carter Library

The claims legislation included, deep in its legal language, section 17:d(2), which decreed that at least 80 million acres of "national interest" lands be set aside for protection based on their natural features. These were the lands I would refer to (endlessly, according to my staff) as "the crown jewels of Alaska." The Nixon and Ford Administrations did not give great priority to working out what lands would be preserved. The task fell to Jimmy Carter, and to the onetime gyppo logger he appointed to be Interior Secretary.

The state and natives had made their land claims to Alaska. But development interests and their allies seemed to want open season on all federal, state, and tribal lands. The Great Land's politicians dreamed of the same rush to mine and log and drill that had swept across the rest of the West. Asked what places deserved protection, one developer would tell the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* that national parks were fine as long as they were located "above 12,000 feet."

A canny and moderate Alaska politician of the era, two-term GOP Gov. **Jay Hammond**, would later characterize his state's gung-ho developers as "propeller-heads." Hammond explained in his memoirs that one major challenge in seeking a reasonable solution to Alaska's land controversies was reining in unreasonable people. Some folks would live up to Hammond's nickname. We heard arguments that moose love mines. Clear-cuts would improve the view so bald eagles could better spot their prey. Pulp mill effluent provided a warm habitat for salmon.

Behind the rhetoric flowed a gusher of dollars. Oil companies and miners poured resources into a classic industry lobbying campaign. Some of it was candid: U.S. Borax made clear its desire to build a big mine in the heart of Misty Fjords. But there was also a phony citizens movement that made way-out claims of potential economic damage to Alaska. The goal was to reduce the size and undermine the purposes of proposed national parks. One mining company wanted to build a road across major wildlife migration routes in the planned Gates of the Arctic National Park. Wildlife would adapt, we were told. They would have to adapt. In some places, however, nature should still run wild. Some creatures—grizzlies come to mind—do not easily share space with two-legged intruders. In the Brooks Range, a barren-ground grizzly bear needs to range over as much as 100,000 acres of land.

We also heard a lot of phony characterizations of those who would enjoy these protected public lands. From generation to generation, and from place to place, America's preservation battles have featured similar false claims. In the early 1940s, opponents argued that creation of a national park in the Teton Range of Wyoming would devastate the local economy, then based on ranching. Critics held that **Franklin D. Roosevelt** was committing a giant waste of timber when he put 900,000 acres of Washington's Olympic Mountains, including rain-forest valleys, into a national park. Today, of course, Grand Teton and Olympic national parks are among the nation's premier travel destinations. President Clinton has twice vacationed at Grand Teton National Park.

Similarly, in Alaska, dire predictions accompanied the creation or expansion of 10 national parks. But the great green splotches of parks on tourist maps intrigued would-be visitors and have attracted thousands of people to the Great Land. In the late 1970s, nobody could foresee that within 20 years the state capital of Juneau would play host to 500,000 cruise ship passengers a year. Or that many would peel off the regular tourist path to watch bears in Admiralty Island National Monument or take boats up Tracy Arm in a nearby wilderness area. The town of Seward has prospered as a gateway to the seal and bird rookeries of Kenai Fjords National Park.

Even back in 1980, however, people sensed the value of what we were doing, although it would be years—if ever—before they would see such wild places. Americans had made a headlong rush in the 19th Century to exploit their land. They were, by the late 20th Century, of a mood not to repeat the excesses of yesterday. We were fighting powerful lobbies, but public opinion stood with us. I received countless letters, from schoolkids as well as seniors, arguing that caribou herds and wolves in Alaska should not be allowed to go the way of the passenger pigeon or Plains buffalo.

I grew attached to places we were fighting to preserve. Admiralty Island, west of Juneau, is home to the nation's densest concentrations of brown bears and nesting bald eagles. In the 1950s, however, its forests were viewed by the U.S. Forest Service only as a source of wood chips. A big pulp mill was planned near Juneau, with its lucky owner to get a 50-year timber supply contract. Uncle Sam would have subsidized the logging roads. A lawsuit stopped the contract and set the stage for our fight to preserve the million-acre island.

The Brooks Range in northern Alaska is a wildland with vertical granite walls to rival Yosemite, lakes with the world's finest fly-fishing, and concentrations of wildlife reminiscent of what Lewis and Clark saw as they crossed the Great Plains. Big-scale country, even compared with Idaho, the Gates of the Arctic took my breath away when I saw it in 1978. Stewart Udall had primed **Lyndon Johnson** to proclaim a national monument in the heart of the Brooks Range just before Johnson left the White House in 1969. The papers were on the President's desk. Udall, however, committed an unpardonable sin against Johnson's psyche. He renamed the Washington, DC, football stadium after **Robert F. Kennedy**. Johnson refused to sign off on the monument. The Brooks Range became a football in the epic American feud between LBJ and the Kennedys. Once again, action had to await the Alaska Lands Act.

The Interior Department and its Secretary get only periodic attention. Unlike the Secretary of State or Attorney General, I was not immediately confronted with a list of the world's hot spots or faced with a decision about the ethical lapses of one of the President's closest friends. Interior was overseer of a vast domain, but was rarely seen in Washington, DC's media frenzy. The Department had been pretty well neutered over the previous 10 years. Walter Hickel was outspoken on many fronts after President Nixon gave him the Interior Department job in 1969. He was unceremoniously fired in 1970. The lesson was not lost on his successors, who did not stick their necks out or do anything to attract much notice.

Jimmy Carter was, with Theodore Roosevelt, one of the two most committed conservationists ever to occupy the Oval Office. After the Administration's initial stumble over its hit list of water projects, he actively backed me up. As preludes to the Alaska battle, we were able to get Congress to pass a Surface Mining Act, requiring that mined-

over land be replanted and reclaimed. The Interior Department was charged with enforcing the law. We created a bidding mechanism for coal mining leases on federal land and put environmental provisions into offshore leasing.

The Interior Department was a player, which in the last days of Carter's presidency was a crucial factor in getting an Alaska Lands Act signed into law. We needed to get the issue resolved while Carter was still in office. Ronald Reagan was certainly not going to "lock up"—to use a favorite term of his supporters— a quarter of the nation's largest state. In 1978 and again in 1980, the two houses of Congress had passed two very different Alaska lands bills, under auspices of two very different architects. The House of Representatives passed sweeping legislation containing every acre we wanted and then some. Overseeing the bill was Representative **Morris Udall**, chairman of the House Interior Committee and one of the remarkable conservationists of our time.

Mo Udall saw the opportunity for preservation in Alaska and nurtured it. He appointed soft-spoken but fearless Congressman **John Seiberling**, to chair hearings on what and how much to preserve. Udall and Seiberling made sure everybody was heard, not just the drums that were banging loudest. In the case of Southeast Alaska, the subcommittee heard not only the Louisiana-Pacific Corporation, which wanted to log everywhere within economical reach of its Ketchikan mill but also operators of small fishing lodges on Prince of Wales Island, whose livelihoods were threatened by rapid clear-cutting of their island home. With such groundwork laid, a conservationist Alaska lands package rolled over a rival proposal by a 100-vote margin on the House floor.

The Senate, by contrast, preserved almost as much land, but also kept open a variety of development opportunities. It excised the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from wilderness designation. A hole was left in the wilderness portion of Misty Fjords National Monument to make room for U.S. Borax and its planned molybdenum mine. The Senate bill was crafted by two shrewd legislative barons, Democratic Senator **Henry Jackson** of Washington and Alaska's Ted Stevens. Scoop Jackson was a friend of mine. He had helped get me elected governor of Idaho in 1970. He was a visionary, author of the National Environmental Policy Act, and liked to rumble at young environmentalists, "I was a conservationist before you were born."

Scoop was, however, shaped by the World War II experience. He never forgot the lessons of Munich, seeing an America forever in danger from Soviet military might. Nor did he forget that Japan had cut off America's rubber supply when it captured the Dutch East Indies in 1942. Jackson spent much of the 1970s giving long, boring speeches about America's growing dependence on foreign oil. We should have listened to him, but didn't. In Alaska, Jackson saw the need for conservation but also oil reserves and minerals that the country might need in an emergency. He was also a buddy of the first Secretary of Energy, James Schlesinger. As a result, Jackson crafted a bulky beast of a bill. The legislation didn't throw open the doors to development but left open the future possibility. Its provisions created years of employment opportunities for Washington, DC, lobbyists.

Stevens saw Jackson's bill as the best he could get. The Indianapolis-born, Harvard-trained lawyer was one of the toughest adversaries I ever faced across the bargaining-table. He had gone to Alaska as an Interior Department lawyer in the 1950s and came back as a U.S. Senator in 1968. In 1978, just before Carter proclaimed the national monuments, we had tried to reconcile the positions of the conservationist House and the development-sympathetic Senate. The result was an all-night meeting with memorable performances by a laid-back Mo Udall and a fiery Ted Stevens.

We thought we had hammered out a compromise. We had a deal, or so we thought. Nobody, however, anticipated the actions of Alaska's junior Senator, **Mike Gravel**. He signed off on the agreement one day, but 24 hours later denounced it and threatened a filibuster if the lands proposal reached the Senate floor. We lost the chance to settle the battle of Alaska in 1978.

Two years later, it was down to the last chance. We were back in the same place, with separate House and Senate bills and no chance of a compromise. But Reagan was a month away from taking office. We had to make a strategic decision. The forces campaigning for parks and wildlife refuges could swallow the Senate bill, with its complications and compromises, or watch four years of work go down the tubes. All we had to do, in a lame-duck session of Congress, was get the House to go along with the Senate legislation.

The environmental groups were initially hostile. I actually had to listen to the idiotic argument that they could get a better Alaska package out of Reagan and his proposed Secretary of Interior, **James Watt**. Cooler heads quickly prevailed, however. For perhaps the only time in the movement's history, environmental leaders had to look at each other and say, "This is all we can get." It proved the old adage that there's nothing like a hanging in the morning to focus the mind. Even though we were creating tomorrow's controversies, a 103-million-acre plan amounting to more than 25 percent of Alaska was a helluva lot better than nothing.

As part of the deal, we ended up protecting almost all of Admiralty Island and, at eight million acres, Gates of the Arctic National Park is one of the world's largest protected areas. Some people never forgot or forgave us. Fourteen years after the Alaska Lands Act became law, Rep. **Don Young** would grumble to an interviewer, "Jimmy Carter and Cecil Andrus locked up Alaska." In my ears, those were words of tribute.

I stood in the East Room that morning in 1980, waiting for Carter to arrive to sign the lands act, with a lot of memories of people and places flashing across my mind. Soon my U-Haul would be loaded and I'd be headed back to Idaho. A culminating achievement would send me home. I thought of my dad, who taught me to fish and schooled me in the first and most essential lesson about both fishing and conservation: If you mess up a stream, there won't be any more fish. Anger over watching places get messed up became one of my strongest motivating factors in politics.

My thoughts flashed forward to the 1960s, when I was finding my voice in the Idaho Legislature. The U.S. Forest Service allowed logging on steep slopes above the south fork of the Salmon River. We had a heavy, early winter snowpack, followed by warm rains. With no vegetation to hold back the water, streams ran chocolate brown and the resulting floods swept away millions of salmon eggs and ruined one of Idaho's choicest salmon runs.

Secretary Andrus holding a press conference on Alaska.

The arguments of Alaska's mining executives dissolved into another memory. Miners in Idaho's Silver Valley had helped elect me governor. Soon after I took office, I found that children in the valley were suffering from lead poisoning. The south fork of the Coeur d'Alene River ran reddish-brown as it flowed into a lake that is a scenic and recreational gem of my state. Mines would close, jobs would vanish, but a billion-dollar Superfund clean-up would remain.

I thought, finally, of the White Cloud Mountains, where the American Smelting and Refining Company wanted to put a giant open-pit mine. "They're not going to tear down the mountains; they're going to dig a hole," my predecessor, Goernor **Don Samuelson**, declared. The hole was going to be gouged out of the heart of our state, an area with 54 backcountry fishing lakes and the 11,824-foot Castle Peak—the mother of Idaho landmarks. Frog Lake, at its base, was to become a tailing pond. I beat Don Samuelson, aided by 200,000 Idahoans who had hunting or fishing licenses, and stopped the rape of the White Clouds, which became part of the 600,000-acre Sawtooth National Recreation Area.

The experiences in Idaho had prepared me for the greatest conservation battle of all, Alaska. After watching so many mistakes, here was the opportunity to do things right. And the chance to work on it was given to me by Jimmy Carter. Carter had been elected governor of Georgia the same year that I upset Samuelson. Governors conferences gave us the chance to meet, become friends, and grow comfortable dealing with each other. In 1974, I won re-election while he left the Georgia statehouse to embark on what many thought was a quixotic quest for the White House. I had come to recognize the determination in those blue eyes and did not chuckle when the "unknown former Georgia governor" began to tour Iowa and New Hampshire saying, "My name is Jimmy Carter, and I'm running for President."

I was still in the statehouse in 1976 when voters sent Carter to the White House. I wasn't planning to go anywhere when, without warning, a summons came to serve in his Cabinet. The call came at 6 p.m., Boise time, from Carter's transition team. Carter wanted to meet with me at 8 a.m. the next day in Plains, Georgia. I slept not a wink that night, flying from Boise to Seattle and then taking the Northwest red-eye to Atlanta. We rented a Cessna 172 and bumped down on a 2,000-foot-long grass airstrip in Plains. Haggard, dirty, and bleary-eyed, I looked up at a terrifying sight: **Sam Donaldson** and **Helen Thomas** were charging across the grass toward my plane. Was there still time to fly back to Boise?

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